

RICHMOND PARK DIARY: JULY

DEER: About 200 young have been born this year. The calves and fawns accompany their mothers and will remain dependent for some time, still suckling until Christmas. **The young frequently rest in deep grass or Bracken apart from their mothers and are still very vulnerable to disturbance or attack from visitor's dogs. Hinds remain very protective of their offspring and will react aggressively if their calves are approached too closely. It is best to keep to footpaths at this time of year and to keep dogs under close control.**

BRACKEN CONTROL: Where Bracken invades areas of valuable acid grassland, it is controlled by the traditional method of 'bruising'. The Shire horses carry out this work, pulling a specially designed bladed metal roller, which bends and crushes the Bracken fronds. This is more effective than cutting, in gradually reducing the plants vigour. Following consultation with Natural England we will also treat some very dense stands of Bracken with a herbicide. We also cut and harvest Bracken, which is composted to provide acidifying mulch for the rhododendrons in Isabella Plantation.

RAGWORT: This plant is a concern to anyone who manages livestock. Whilst there are 3 types of Ragwort that are almost indistinguishable from each other, only common Ragwort is carcinogenic if consumed by animals in large quantities. It requires bare patches of soil for seeds to germinate, just the sort of conditions that horses hooves tend to make and can therefore become excessively established in horse paddocks. As a precautionary measure we remove Ragwort when it grows adjacent to bridleways. We also remove plants in larger stands, in remote locations but it does represent an important food source for invertebrate such as soldier beetles and cinnabar moths.

TICKS: These tiny insect-like creatures may attach themselves to animals or people passing through long grass or Bracken during the summer months. The ticks feed by piercing the skin to suck blood, which can transmit an illness, called Lyme Disease. The risk is very small and should not deter people from enjoying the Park, but it is advisable to take the following precautions:

- Keep covered up when walking through long grass or bracken, or use insect repellent if bare-legged
- Check your skin and pets fur for the presence of ticks, which may be removed by gently twisting and pulling to ensure that the mouthparts are not left behind. Carefully wash the area after the bite.
- In case of difficulty, consult your doctor
- A leaflet containing further information and advice may be obtained from Holly Lodge – 0208 948 3209.